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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this manual, which accompanies a video program, is to provide general background information for foreign language teachers who are, or soon will be, teaching in total, partial, or two-way immersion classrooms. Part of a series of video programs, this manual highlights current theories, issues, and questions about second language acquisition. The following topics as they relate to children learning a second language in elementary school foreign language immersion classrooms are explored: caregiver speech; contextualized language; comprehensible input; the role of input; the role of output; hypothesis testing/negotiation of meaning; encouragement of oral language development; the role of grammar instruction; the role of error correction; the role of age, aptitude, personality, and motivation. It is suggested that the recommended readings included in the manual be read before viewing the video program. Two papers for background reading are: "Second-Language Development in Immersion Contexts" (Barry McLaughlin) and "Building Programs on a Sound Foundation: From Theory to Practice" (Helena Anderson Curtain; Carol Ann Pesola). (VWL)

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SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN CHILDREN

TEACHER'S ACTIVITY MANUAL

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Photograph by William E. Mills

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PREFACE

Video production

The production of this video program and manual was funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Title VI, International Research and Studies: Improving Foreign Language Methodology Through Immersion Teacher Training. This grant was developed and implemented by the Office of Instruction and Program Development, Department of Academic Skills, Foreign Languages, Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland, from July, 1988, to June, 1989. The activities for this grant were carried out by Eileen Lorenz, immersion resource teacher and Myriam Met, foreign language coordinator.

The production of this program would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of the elementary immersion staff and students of the three Montgomery County Public Schools immersion programs: Oak View, Rock Creek Forest, and Rolling Terrace elementary schools. Montgomery County Public Schools television services staff members also made significant contributions to this project.

Upon request, this manual and video program will be distributed to school districts and institutions of higher education to be used for nonprofit training workshops and research projects. Requests for these materials should be accompanied by a \$25 check made payable to Montgomery County Public Schools. Requests should be addressed to:

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the video program and manual

The purpose of the program and manual is to provide general background information for foreign language teachers who are, or will soon be, teaching in total, partial or two-way immersion classrooms. The second in a series of video programs, "Second Language Acquisition in Children" highlights current theories, issues, and questions. The video program explores the following topics as they relate to children learning a second language in elementary foreign language immersion classrooms:

- Caregiver speech
- Contextualized language
- Comprehensible input
- The role of input
- The role of output
- Hypothesis testing/negotiation of meaning
- Encouragement of oral language development
- The role of grammar instruction
- The role of error correction
- The role of age, aptitude, personality, and motivation

How to use the video program and manual

The Teacher's Activity Manual and the video have been designed to complement one another. Because examples presented in the video program are based on the information presented in the articles, it is strongly recommended that the viewer first read the articles found in the section, "Background Reading," and then view the video program.

INTRODUCTION - continued

The video program and the Teacher's Activity Manual have been divided into four sections. Viewers will find it most helpful to view one segment at a time, completing the activities included in the Teacher's Activity Manual before continuing on to the next video segment and accompanying activities. The related activities in the manual have been developed to provide opportunities for viewers to reflect on and discuss issues and situations encountered by immersion teachers.

The video and accompanying activity manual may be used effectively by either one teacher or by a group of teachers. Multiple viewings are encouraged to review specific sections of the video and provide opportunities to use the program to support a variety of objectives.

BACKGROUND READING

Second-Language Development in Immersion Contexts

Barry McLaughlin

University of California, Santa Cruz

Second-Language Development in Immersion Contexts

Language immersion was developed in Canada in the late 1960s as a means of teaching children from a majority-language background (Anglophones) the language of the minority group (French). The method was called "early total immersion" and was first developed by Wallace Lambert and his associates (Lambert & Tucker 1972). This program is "early" in the sense that children begin their education in kindergarten in a second language and "total" because immersion is (initially) complete. Children hear nothing but French in the classroom. Subsequently, in grades two or three, English is introduced to the classroom for about 20 percent of instructional time, and by the sixth grade instruction is half in French and half in English.

A primary goal of early total immersion programs is to provide the participating students with functional competence in the second language. Students are strongly encouraged from the beginning to use the second language for communicative purposes. Grammatical and structural errors are not given undue attention; the focus is on language as a means of communication rather than as a subject matter for study. In addition, such programs are intended to ensure that students develop first-language literacy skills on a par with those of their monolingually English-educated peers. Indeed, as we shall see in the course of this paper, evaluations of these programs show that they develop second-language skills without any negative effects to the child's first language.

Content-Based Instruction

Why Content-Based Language Learning?

The prime rationale behind immersion education is that language is best learned not as a subject matter but as a medium of instruction. Attempts to teach young children foreign languages have, in the past, been largely unsuccessful. The most ambitious effort in this direction were FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) programs, which employed audio-lingual techniques. For a number of reasons these programs proved ineffectual (McLaughlin, 1984).

After all, children do not learn their first language by receiving instruction in grammar or by practicing audio-lingual pattern drills. Careful analysis of parent-child interactions revealed that parents modify their speech considerably in talking to young children learning their first language (McLaughlin, 1984). Indeed, caregiver speech is in some ways ideally suited for the child language learner. It is slower than normal speech, it is directed at the here-and-now. Speech to young children learning their first language is simpler, shorter, and contains a more restricted vocabulary than does speech addressed to older children or adults.

Nor is it necessary to train caregivers to talk in an appropriate way to young language learners. They do so spontaneously when they are attempting to communicate something to the child. Caregivers intuitively modify their speech, use nonlinguistic cues and gestures, and repeat and expand their speech when dealing with young children. Otherwise, if they speak as they would to another adult, the child tunes out and communication is disrupted.

What appears of prime importance is the nature of the interaction between parents and their children. Gordon Wells (1981), in a study of interaction patterns in the family that relate to language development, found that one particular process was especially critical. He called this "negotiating meaning." It refers to the collaboration needed in conversation to express needs, ideas, and intentions. When caregivers are concerned with negotiating meaning--their own and the child--they do many things automatically to ensure that meaning is communicated--slowing down their speech, repeating, expanding, etc. (McLaughlin, 1984; Wong Fillmore, 1982).

The implication for second-language instruction is that focus should not be on language learning per se, as a separate subject matter, but on using language in meaningful communicative settings. Like the child learning the first language through negotiating meaning, the child learning a second language in school will learn the language "naturally" if it is used as a medium of instruction. When language is taught by requiring its use to communicate content, teachers and students must negotiate meaning so that the subject matter--whether it be math, social studies, or history--is understood.

This research indicates that teachers will aid students in acquiring a second language in an immersion context if they focus on communicating content. They do not need to be instructed in how to modify their input to facilitate language acquisition. Although teachers do not need to be instructed in *how* to modify their input to facilitate language acquisition, they do need to be aware of the importance of making such modifications. When teachers communicate content in a way that is meaningful to the child, they will automatically modify their language to meet the child's needs--just as parents and other caregivers automatically modify their language to meet the needs of the

young child. This does not mean that the task of the immersion teacher is easy and effortless. Immersion teachers have to communicate content in ways that foster both language and content knowledge. They need to be continually aware of the problems of individual students, constantly eliciting feedback and checking understanding. Especially in large classes, negotiating meaning is tough work.

Beyond Content-Based Instruction

This emphasis on negotiating meaning in content-based instruction is supported by research with child second-language learners that indicates that language development is promoted when children are in a rich linguistic environment and have opportunities to use the language actively in meaningful social interactions (Wong Fillmore, 1982). A rich linguistic environment provides abundant opportunities for learners to hear and use language in meaningful and purposeful contexts. In this environment learners are surrounded by language. Language is tied to experience, through which children match the language they hear with their real life referents. In a rich linguistic environment learners are motivated to use language through participation in activities and communicative interactions that are inherently of interest to them. For the most part, teachers automatically provide a rich linguistic environment if they focus on communicating successfully. By using pictures, demonstrations, gestures, enactment, or whatever works to communicate information and to link language to context, teachers spontaneously modify their language (just as the parent does) to the linguistic needs of the child.

However, it is important to recognize that language learning cannot occur if children rarely use the language. The child needs to be an active participant if meaning is to

be negotiated. Children must be allowed to bring their own experiences into the classroom and efforts must be made to provide children with opportunities to use the target language in meaningful ways.

Hence the current interest among Canadian immersion educators in going beyond content-based instruction and emphasizing the role of the child as an active learner (Cummins, 1988). If learners do not have sufficient opportunities to use the language meaningfully, language development will be stunted. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that the French of even the most successful graduates of immersion programs in Canada is not fluent. Many students speak what has been called "immersion French," a non-standard, anglosized form of French.

The influence of language transfer errors in these children's speech is quite pronounced, both in the form of transfer of surface structure grammar and lexical items. Thus for example, children will pick one meaning for a French word and use the English translation equivalent of this meaning for all contexts in French--thereby ignoring the fact that words can cover different semantic domains in the two languages. Or speakers will slur the French articles *le* and *la*, so as to avoid the nasty work of determining which gender is appropriate. Finally, it has been observed that some children in immersion programs will have perfect French accents in the lower grades, only to acquire a marked English accent in their French pronunciation by the upper grades (Lightbown, personal communication). This phenomenon is probably due to a growing identification with the English-speaking peer group and isolation from French-speaking peers.

Canadian educators believe that these problems stem from the lack of contact between immersion students and native French speakers and from limited opportunities

for real two-way communication in immersion classrooms. Aside from providing more opportunities for interaction with native-speaking French children (something difficult to accomplish, apparently, in the Canadian context), teachers in immersion programs are encouraged to provide classroom contexts for children to use the language communicatively (Genesee, 1988).

Hence emphasis is put on the use of cooperative learning in immersion classrooms as a method of requiring children to use the target language meaningfully to reach predetermined goals in small group activities. Cooperative learning techniques involve structuring and planning for student-to-student interactions that promote peer learning and communication. There is also a great deal of interest in experiential learning, through reading utilizing language experience texts and process writing in which children are encouraged to share and amplify their personal experiences (Cummins, 1988). The thesis underlying these developments is that content-based instruction is not enough for successful second-language learning, but that content has to be explored in a meaningful collaborative setting by teachers and students.

Language Development in Immersion Classes

First-Language Development

In the early studies, children in early immersion programs did not receive formal instruction in their first language until the second or third grade. Hence it is not surprising that they performed poorer initially than English-speaking control students in reading comprehension, spelling, and written vocabulary. As Genesee (1987) notes, what is more

surprising is the level of literacy in their first language that the immersion students actually achieved in spite of their lack of formal instruction in that language. He cites studies that indicate that immersion students in the first grade average at about the 40th percentile on tests of word knowledge, reading, and word discrimination, improve in the second grade, and are at the same level as English-speaking controls by the third grade, when English is introduced as a formal subject. Spelling shows a more marked lag, but even here immersion students catch up to their native-speaking peers by the sixth grade.

Lambert and Tucker (1972) looked at the oral language proficiency of first-grade early total immersion students by using a story creation task. Each student was presented with a set of comic-strip pictures and asked to make up a story. In spite of the emphasis on French in these children's instruction, there were no differences in oral communication skills when the immersion students were compared to their peers in the all-English classroom. Similar results have been found in tests of listening comprehension in English.

Once the immersion children begin to receive formal instruction in English, differences in writing skills evaporate. Studies indicate that they score as well as English native-speaking controls on various aspects of language, and, in one study, were found to make fewer morphological errors in their use of nouns, verbs, adjective, adverbs, prepositions, and pronouns (Swain, 1975).

In short, the research indicates that development in English language skills shows an initial lag, followed by parity within a year of receiving English language arts instruction. This is the case whether English language instruction begins in grade 2, 3, or 4 (Genesee, 1987). One interesting finding in this literature is that immersion alternatives

that provide more English language instruction initially, such as a partial immersion program in which only 50 percent of the curriculum is in French and the rest in English, do not produce higher levels of English language proficiency than early total immersion programs (Swain & Lapkin, 1982). Furthermore, partial immersion programs have the disadvantage of reduced French language proficiency relative to early total immersion programs.

Second-Language Development

Children in French early immersion programs in Canada have been extensively studied to determine their development in second-language acquisition. Tests include language proficiency instruments directed at speaking, listening, reading, and writing. By and large, the children's second-language development far exceeds that obtained via any other method. In the classic Lambert and Tucker (1972) study, French language skills at the end of the first grade were almost all poorer for the immersion children than for French-speaking controls, except for word discrimination, sentence comprehension, and word order. At the end of the second grade, immersion children showed continued improvement in French. Although they were still behind French-speaking controls, especially in matters of grammar, progress in pronunciation and in basic sound units was noticeable.

By the end of the fourth grade, the children in the immersion program were rated by a group of linguists to be at or above the neutral point in competence for all indices of French language arts (although they did not surpass native French-speaking children). Other research on children in Canadian French immersion programs has consistently

demonstrated the same pattern of results: after several years, children in these programs have achieved proficiency in French without any negative consequences to their English language skills (Genesee, 1987; Swain, 1978).

As was noted earlier, however, French language development never reaches the point where immersion children feel their French language skills are on a par with native-speaking peers. Swain (1981) argued that this is due to the relatively low exposure the children in immersion programs have to the French language when compared to French children (who use the language at home and in the community). Once immersion children reach the point in their second-language development where they can make themselves understood to their teacher and classmates, there is no strong social incentive to develop further towards native speaker norms.

Theory and Instructional Practices

The Nature of Child Second-Language Learning

Once a child has established a first language, is there a qualitative difference in how subsequent languages are learned? Some authors argue there is a difference in that older children have acquired the conceptual system of their first language and have knowledge of the world, knowledge of spatial and object relations, knowledge of causality, which the child acquiring a first language does not have. Furthermore, older children, on hearing a sentence never heard before, can bring to it knowledge of sound groupings, configurations, and grammatical relationships that the younger child does not have.

Nonetheless, most authors do not see these differences as constituting a qualitative difference between first and second language in childhood (McLaughlin, 1984). Like the second-language learner, the first-language learner makes use of prior knowledge, skills, and tactics. What differences exist are thought to be quantitative in nature, resulting from the greater cognitive maturity of the second-language learner and from social and affective factors. In terms of how the language is learned, first-language acquisition and second-language acquisition follow similar developmental progressions.

This is especially true for children in immersion programs, where there is relatively little focus on linguistic form (in comparison to a formal second-language classroom). Like children learning their first language, immersion children learn language in a natural communication setting. Hence one expects to see their development follow the natural course it follows in first-language learners of the target language.

Unfortunately, not a great deal is known about the course of first-language development in languages other than English (Lightbown, 1985). However, most researchers agree that children of the same age and cognitive capacities learning a second-language follow a similar developmental course. This means that the immersion teacher can expect children to acquire their second-language skills along a similar path. Where a child lags significantly behind other children in the class--e.g., in learning prepositions or verb forms--special remediation is called for.

The Optimal Age Issue

A number of authors have argued that young children are superior language acquirers because humans are biologically programmed to acquire language before puberty and

young children have available to them optimal linguistic coding devices. Some authors endorse a "younger-is-better" position, according to which younger children are regarded as better second-language learners than older children. This would argue for early immersion programs as opposed to late immersion programs (where children begin the immersion program in grades seven or eight).

The evidence for the "younger-is-better" hypothesis is not convincing, however. Indeed, much research indicates that, given the same amount of exposure, older children are better second-language learners than younger ones (McLaughlin, 1985). Students in Canadian two-year late immersion programs have been found to do as well as early immersion students. Late immersion students with less than one-third of the exposure that early immersion students receive score as well on tests of French language skills in high school (Genesee, 1987).

These findings do not necessarily mean that late immersion is to be preferred to early immersion, because there is considerable evidence that the "younger-is-better" hypothesis does hold for one area of language proficiency--pronunciation. Research shows that young children are significantly better at mastering accent. This is a strong argument in favor of early immersion programs. Furthermore, in the studies that have been conducted to date, there were instructional features that favored late immersion students. These students received more intensive and more individualized, activity-based instruction than do children in typical early immersion programs. If such instructional features are employed more broadly in early immersion programs, these programs might show more long-term success. As was indicated above, many teachers in Canadian early immersion programs are now using experiential learning techniques, cooperative learning

approaches, and other methods that require children to use the target language meaningfully.

Input in First- and Second-Language Acquisition

Earlier the point was made that parents modify their speech considerably in speaking to young children acquiring their first language. Although there are cultural and sub-cultural variations, mainstream, middle-class American caregivers modify their speech considerably when talking to young children. This finding has led to a reconsideration of the language learning process.

Twenty years ago research on first-language acquisition focussed almost exclusively on the internal processes of the child. This emphasis was part of the Chomskyan heritage. Chomsky had argued that the child possesses at birth a language sensing mechanism—or what he called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). According to this view, the contents of LAD are unknown—it is the proverbial black box as applied to language learning. Something is known about what goes into the black box and about what comes out. The output is assumed by Chomsky to be the adult competence in a language that is formally described by a grammar of that language. What goes in—the input—is the content of sentences heard by children from parents, other adults, other children, television, and so forth.

Chomsky argued that this input is basically "meager and degenerate," characterized by false starts, hesitations, slips of the tongue, unfinished and ungrammatical utterances. That children can work from this meager and degenerate input to adult competence indicated for Chomsky that input is not a major factor in language acquisition. Instead it is

the internal processes of LAD that matter in language development.

It turned out, however, that Chomsky was wrong in his claim that language input to the child is "meager and degenerate." It has now been well documented that the great majority of utterances addressed to children are well-formed by any criterion. It seems that Chomsky and his followers had gone too far in denying the importance of factors external to the child.

Rather than being "meager and degenerate," the linguistic environment of the child appears to be quite well suited to facilitate language development. Recent research on mother-child communication suggests that mothers and other caregivers have a special way of talking to the child in early conversational interactions--a language convention that persists over generations and has been called *caregiver speech*. There are three general characteristics of this particular style of speech. First of all, there is a special lexicon, a special set of words, that characterizes caregiver speech. The lexicon contains names for body parts, basic qualities, kin terms, names for some animals and games. There are also intonational variations--speech has a higher overall pitch, there is often a rising intonation at the end of sentences, there are more instances of emphatic stress, and speech is slower and more precise than speech to adults. Finally, there are grammatical modifications--much greater use of nouns and pronouns, more third person constructions, fewer verbs, modifiers, conjunctions, and prepositions in speech addressed to young children than in speech addressed to older children or adults.

Speech addressed to young children learning the first language also contains more repetitions and is more likely to be about the here and now. Caregivers direct the child's attention to what the child is seeing and doing, to features of the immediate environment.

They name objects for the child, ask rhetorical questions, repeat and expand the child's utterances. Parental speech to young children has been described as a set of language lessons. Parents prod and prompt the child, ask questions of the child, and answer their own questions:

What's this?

It's a ball, isn't it?

Ball. Ball.

Can you say ball?

In short, investigators have found that the speech of adults to young children is in many ways well suited to gain and hold the child's attention and to make meaning apparent. Nonetheless, although it is clear that caregiver speech facilitates language development in a general manner, it is not clear how and why this is the case and which aspects of caregiver speech make a difference. At this point, it seems safe to say that *both* internal and external factors are important for first-language development in young children.

This is true for second-language learning as well. It is important for the child learning a second language to be provided with rich input. Like first-language development, second-language development is promoted when children are in a rich linguistic environment and have opportunities to use the language actively in meaningful social interactions. By focusing on communicating successfully, teachers automatically provide a rich linguistic environment for the child learner. Some authors (e.g., Krashen, 1985) have argued that providing "comprehensible input" is the major element assisting learners acquiring a second language. This is certainly an important part of the process: learners-

-like very young children learning their first language--must be provided with input they can understand. Indeed, it is often suggested that time be given to children to develop their comprehension in the second-language. They should not be made to use constructions in speech before they can understand them.

However, comprehensible input is not enough. Most researchers believe that *understanding* new forms is only the beginning; the learner must be given the opportunity to *produce* the new forms. Swain (1985) has argued for the importance of "comprehensible output." Indeed, the emphasis currently placed on "negotiating" meaning assumes that learners are active participants in communicative interactions.

Long and Porter (1985) have provided evidence for the usefulness of what they termed "interlanguage talk," conversation between non-native speakers in which they negotiate meaning in groups. Such group work has been found to increase the communicative abilities of the group members and to motivate students to learn. It provides evidence that learners can benefit from talking--that is, from active engagement in communication.

Furthermore, too much emphasis on providing learners with comprehensible input ignores the problem of errors. It is questionable whether comprehensible input alone can account for how learners correct and adjust their hypotheses about the language. Unless learners try out the language, they are unlikely to get the kind of feedback they need to analyze the structure of the language. Wong Fillmore described this process in the school children she studied:

Second language learning in a school context thus requires the active participation of both the learners and those who provide them with appropriate "input." Learners have to work actively on this input, guessing at what is being talked about and continually trying to sort out relationships between observed speech and experiences. Unless the

speakers use the language in ways that permit the learners to figure out what is being talked about, the learners will not be able to perform the necessary analyses on the language. Unless the learners try to sort things out and provide feedback to the speakers to aid them in making the necessary adjustments, learning will not occur (1982, 9).

Thus the process of language learning involves active hypothesis-testing, which requires learners to use the language and to profit from the input others provide and from their own output. The problem in immersion classes is to provide the opportunity for all learners to use the target language in meaningful ways. One solution is to have children engage in group work, which has been found to increase the communicative abilities of the group members and to motivate students to learn. Thus, as mentioned earlier, recent emphasis in immersion classrooms has been put on cooperative learning and various forms of experiential learning.

Error Correction

An important problem for immersion teachers is how to eliminate learners' incorrect forms. Too much emphasis on error correction has the danger of increasing student anxiety and inhibition. On the other hand, fresh doses of "comprehensible input" will not necessarily lead learners to correct incorrect forms. There are any number of cases where the inconsistency between the present state of the system and the input data will not be apparent from an examination of the input.

White (1985) has provided a number of such examples. For instance, a French speaker, learning English, must learn that in English, unlike French, an adverb cannot come between a verb and a direct object. In English we cannot say "The dog bit viciously the boy." Yet adverbial placement in English is relatively free, so that sen-

tences such as "The dog bit the boy viciously," "The dog viciously bit the boy," and "Viciously, the dog bit the boy" are all allowed. A native speaker of French who assumes that English is like French in adverbial placement will not receive positive input indicating that this is not the case. Nor will this information come from extra-linguistic sources.

Another example is a Spanish speaker learning English who assumes that empty pronouns are allowed, such as "Is very busy" for "She is very busy." In Spanish, lexical pronouns and empty pronouns are not mutually exclusive, and the learner is likely to think that the same is true in English. Hearing sentences such as "She is very busy" does not provide the learner with information that "Is very busy" is not allowed. The way to learn these rules is through formal instruction, where the discrepancy between the learner's intermediate forms and target-language norms can be pointed out. Indeed, by learning such rules learners can greatly reduce the time it takes to become proficient in a second language.

Grammar Instruction and Practice

This brings us to the topic of grammar instruction. It is popular today to look on grammar instruction as non-productive (Krashen, 1985), as little more than a source of input. It seems more fruitful to admit that correction and grammar teaching can help to stimulate change and can lead to a different stage in the acquisition process (White, 1985). Young children profit more from examples than from grammar lessons, but when a child has sufficient metalinguistic skills to understand grammar lessons (usually some rudimentary principles of grammar can be taught in the third grade), correction and

grammar teaching can provide a shortcut for learners.

This is not to subscribe to language teaching methods that rely heavily on grammar teaching. But I would argue that there is a role for correction and grammar teaching in language instruction from the third grade on. As one author put it,

Strategically, much of the effort spent arguing against the teaching of grammar might be better spent on convincing true believers in grammar instruction that grammar has a newly defined but useful role to play in language teaching and in showing them what it is (Krahnke, 1985, 598).

That is, without overemphasizing grammatical instruction for young children, teachers can teach grammatical skills through practice in the context of content instruction (Snow, Met & Genesee, 1989). With older students, in particular, grammatical instruction is helpful in giving students schemata that enable them to avoid mistakes. What is important in such instruction is that students are taught to see that following grammatical rules is necessary to convey information in a manner that will be clearly understood. The focus should be on communication, not on grammar per se.

Similarly, drill and practice are frowned upon by many second-language educators. There is little doubt that drilling students in grammatical structures via meaningless pattern practice has proven to be counter-productive and frustrating to learners. Recently, however, it has been suggested that there is no need for pattern practice to be carried out in a meaningless fashion, but that students can engage in repeated practice with specific utterances in the context of meaningful activities and role playing (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 1988).

Thus, for example, there is a large domain of utterances in normal, everyday discourse that are inherently repetitive and formulaic. If teachers can make repetition natural in the context of communicative settings, utterances can become automatic and

available to learners. An obvious group of formulaic utterances includes greetings, leave-taking phrases, and various idiomatic expressions. But there are many other possibilities as well:

One should ... select as targets those sentences and productive sentence frames that are intimately associated with the basic language functions that learners can normally be expected to need to know, such as requesting (e.g., *Can you give me two, please?*), directing (e.g., *Stay here*), asking questions (e.g., *Where did you go?*), describing past activities (e.g., *I went shopping; I went to bed late*), and so on. Because these and similar sentences are tied to basic functions, they are likely to be used by speakers in day-to-day interactions and thus would be useful when routinized (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 1988, 479).

Grammar instruction and drill and practice in the second-language classroom may not fit with current thinking in second-language pedagogy. However, the intuition of many teachers is that grammar instruction is helpful to learners and that practice makes perfect. There is no convincing evidence that these beliefs are erroneous. Obviously, excessive reliance on grammar instruction and meaningless pattern practice is contrary to the spirit of content-based immersion education. The point here is that some use of these techniques is legitimate and can be helpful to immersion students, provided that grammar instruction is tied to meaning and that practice is both meaningful and purposeful.

Individual Differences

Intelligence

Educational psychologists and teachers are often asked whether immersion education is suitable for all children. For example, it may be that immersion education should be restricted to the "brighter" students. However, research with this variable has not

shown intelligence to affect a child's ability to profit from an immersion experience.

Intelligence does relate to success in some language-learning situations:

Apparently, verbal intelligence is more extensively required in the more formal, literature-oriented courses taught in high school, college, and university courses than it is in more audio-lingually and practically oriented courses. ... I have also speculated that the extent to which verbal intelligence is required in foreign language courses depends upon the degree to which the mode of instruction puts a premium on a student's verbal intelligence in order to understand the content of instruction (Carroll, 1981, 106).

That is, verbal intelligence plays a greater role in second-language learning when the material is taught in a formal manner than when language is learned through content, as in an immersion classroom.

Indeed, research in immersion settings indicates that intelligence correlates less strongly with second-language learning in younger than in older learners (Genesee & Hamayan, 1980). Most likely, this is because there is more analytic instruction in language with older children and because there is probably a correlation between literacy and second-language learning (Genesee, 1976).

Other research substantiates the claim that intelligence is not a major factor in the success of children in immersion classes. This question has been addressed in the Canadian research in a number of studies that have looked at the relationship between intelligence and performance in immersion programs (Genesee, 1987). In general, these studies show that less intelligent students perform poorer than other students in immersion programs, just as they perform poorer than other students in the normal classroom. There is no evidence, however, that they do any worse in immersion classes than in normal classes. That is, immersion children with below-average IQ do not perform significantly lower than children with below-average intelligence in the normal program on various tests of academic performance.

There is one exception to this general rule. Although the usual pattern was found with respect to literacy-based French language skills, such as reading and grammar, this was not the case with respect to tests of interpersonal communication skills. On the literacy-based tests, high-intelligence and average-intelligence children outperformed low-intelligence children. However, French-speaking evaluators could not distinguish above-average intelligence children and below-average intelligence children on the basis of speech samples.

These and other findings suggest that educationally disadvantaged children in immersion programs show the same levels of academic achievement as similarly disadvantaged students in normal classes (Genesee, Holobow, Lambert, Gastright & Met, 1984; Holobow, Genesee & Lambert, 1987). In a number of cases the root cause of students' inability to cope in immersion programs reflects enduring personal and affective problems that are not tied specifically to immersion in a second language. Overall, as Genesee (1987) observed, immersion has shown itself to be an effective form of second-language education for students with diverse learner characteristics.

Aptitude

A somewhat more subtle source of individual difference in performance in immersion classrooms is language aptitude. One criticism of studies of immersion programs is that a selection bias may be operating. G. L. MacNab noted that children in Canadian immersion programs:

tend to come from homes where there is an open cognitive ambiance and where there is encouragement of learning in general and language learning in particular. In this environment the brighter, more able child picks up the second language and becomes bilingual, the less able child is less apt to become fully (or balanced) bilingual, in part because he has other options open and does not have to spend energies becoming fluently bilingual if that is difficult for him (1979, 251).

The question that this comment raises is whether there is a difference between children in their aptitude to learn languages such that one child would be expected to do well in the immersion class whereas another would not.

Typically, researchers have discounted aptitude (e.g., Krashen, 1985), yet there is interesting research that suggests that individual differences in language learning ability can play a role in second-language learning. This research comes from work reported by Skehan (1986) who used children in the Bristol Language Project who were of secondary (high) school age and were learning French as a second language in school. Skehan found that children who had developed more quickly in their first language, as indicated by such measures as MLU (mean length of utterance, a measure of how much children say) and sentence structure complexity (taken when they were beginning to talk), performed better in learning a second language. Similarly, a test of vocabulary given early in life correlated consistently with subsequent aptitude. That is, there appears to be a general language processing capacity that affects language-learning ability, both in first and subsequent languages.

Research with adult second-language learners suggests that several processes relate to successful learning (Carroll, 1981):

- (1) phonetic coding ability--the ability to identify distinct sounds, to form associations between these sounds and symbols represented by them, and to retain these associations;
- (2) grammatical sensitivity--the ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words (or other linguistic entities) in sentence structure.

- (3) rote learning ability for foreign language materials--the ability to learn associations between sounds and meanings rapidly and efficiently, and to retain these associations; and
- (4) inductive language learning ability--the ability to infer or induce the rules governing a set of language materials, given samples of language materials that permit such inferences

These components were arrived at by statistical analyses of correlational data involving Carroll's Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and other tests of language aptitude and classroom language performance.

To note the possibility that children will differ in their performance in immersion classrooms because of differences in language aptitude is not to deny the importance of attitudes and motivation in language learning. Nor do I wish to argue that aptitude is a static personality trait. Individuals who initially have less aptitude can be taught to develop strategies and metacognitive skills that improve their ability to acquire a second language. Teachers do this when they develop a good attitude in the learner, establish learning goals, reduce the learner's frustration and tension. They do it when they teach children to get organized, to monitor their performance, ask questions, and focus their attention. This is what good language teaching is all about.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are several main points I would wish to leave with the reader:

- (1) The research on Canadian immersion programs shows this method to be effective in promoting second-language learning, though there are limitations to this approach. The advantage of the immersion approach is that it is content-based and forces children to learn the language in a meaningful communicative context.

One problem in the Canadian context is that children have little contact with native speakers and so develop deviant forms and strategies.

- (2) Furthermore, Canadian researchers are concerned about the lack of real two-way communication in immersion classes. Hence there is a great deal of interest in the utilization of techniques such as cooperative learning, experiential learning, and other techniques that require active participation and engagement with the language in meaningful communication.
- (3) Thus there is an emerging consensus that to become successful second-language learners it is not enough for children to understand new forms; they must have opportunities to produce new forms, so that they correct and adjust their hypotheses about the language. Both input from others and one's own output are useful in this process.
- (4) While excessive reliance on grammar instruction and error correction are to be avoided in immersion classes, these techniques are useful in shortcircuiting the learning process and in preventing the ossification of erroneous forms. This is especially true for older learners, whose cognitive makeup and abilities differ from those of younger learners. Needless to say, grammar instruction should be related to the role grammar plays in improving our effectiveness in conveying meaning, and practice should be set in a meaningful context.
- (5) Although children learning a second language can be expected to follow a similar developmental path, there are considerable individual differences in rate of progress. Attitudinal and motivational factors affect the child's success, as well as language learning aptitude. Teachers need to be aware that some children are not

as skilled as others in learning languages and require help in developing successful strategies and metacognitive skills.

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Chapter 5

Building Programs on a Sound Foundation: From Theory to Practice

Children have a reputation for being natural language learners, for very good reason. Almost without exception they have learned their native language with apparent ease, and by the time they are six years old they have brought it to a level of fluency that is the envy of non-native speakers. Parents who bring their children into a second language setting and immerse them in a new situation, for example, an elementary school class taught in the foreign language, often experience a kind of miracle. After around six months their child begins to function successfully in the new setting and at a linguistic level to which the parents cannot hope to aspire, even when they have been studying the language seriously for a similar period of time.

These examples of children's natural language learning ability might seem to suggest that the best thing to do to help a child learn a language is simply to place the child in the target language setting and then stay out of the way to let the miracle happen. Unfortunately, this is not an approach that will make it possible to bring languages to every child. There is, however, both linguistic and psychological theory to help explain children's seemingly effortless second language acquisition and to provide insights that can make the classroom a better place for such language acquisition to take place. An understanding of this theory, together with an understanding of the principles of child development and of the characteristics of children at different stages of development, will help prepare the teacher to create a curriculum and activities that bring languages and children together effectively.

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second language acquisition theory may help to explain the puzzling situation of children who acquire languages more quickly, and apparently with much

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less effort, than do their parents, when placed in a local school in the second language environment. The children are in a setting in which they are surrounded by language that is made meaningful because of the context and because of the way teachers speak to them. They are given time to sort out the language that they hear and understand, until they are ready to begin to use it for their own expressive purposes. Their parents, on the other hand, are usually busy learning rules, and they attempt to apply them later to a setting in which they have something to say. For Stephen Krashen, a linguist who has synthesized much of recent second language acquisition research in his writing, the children would be *acquiring* language, the parents would be *learning* it. A review of several of Krashen's theories follows.

Acquisition vs. Learning

The distinction between *acquisition* and *learning* illustrated above is the first hypothesis of second language acquisition, as explained by Krashen (1981b). A second hypothesis, *The Natural Order Hypothesis*, suggests that the structures of a language will be acquired in approximately the same order, regardless of what is being taught in a formal setting.

Monitor Hypothesis

Krashen's third hypothesis describes the functions of the *monitor*. The monitor is the trigger in the brain which applies rules that have been learned in order to accurately produce or interpret a message in the target language. The monitor at work makes the speaker aware of a mistake after it has been made, or it triggers awareness of the error in time to prevent its being spoken aloud. For the monitor to work effectively, the speaker must know the rule, have time to think of the rule and apply it, and be in a setting in which it is appropriate to focus on form. These conditions do not usually apply in the normal conversational situations in which a child is most commonly exposed to the target language.

Input Hypothesis

Krashen's fourth hypothesis of second language acquisition probably has the most direct application to the elementary school foreign language classroom. The *Input Hypothesis* suggests that the most important factor in the amount of language acquired by a learner is the amount of *comprehensible input* to which that learner is exposed. *Comprehensible input* is understood to be the amount of language which the learner can fully understand, plus just a little more: $i + 1$. The " i " represents the level at which the student is now; " $+ 1$ " is just a little beyond. As with Piaget's cognitive theories, for Krashen,

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Worrying about rules and accuracy can impede communication!

the learner must always be challenged, but never to a point at which frustration sets in.

The Input Hypothesis provides a powerful reason for the exclusive use of the target language for all classroom purposes. However, simply deciding to use the target language is not enough. It must be used in such a way that the message is understood by the student at all times, even though every word of the message may not be familiar. This is accomplished through the use of gestures, examples, illustrations, experiences, and caretaker speech, as described below. When teachers complain that children do not understand them when they use the target language, it may well be because they are using the target language at a level that is too far beyond the child's current ability to understand— $i + 10$ or perhaps $i + 50$. Learners who are presented with language too far beyond their current level may well conclude that they are not good language learners and/or that this language is simply too hard to be learned. An important part of the teacher's planning time for a classroom based on the principles of second language acquisition will be devoted to strategies for making the target language comprehensible to the students.

The Input Hypothesis, while currently the subject of lively professional discussion, has brought new attention to the importance of listening skills and to the potential benefits that can come from increased listening opportunities for all students, especially those at the beginning level. An extended

listening period gives learners the opportunity to gather meanings and associate them with language. They can give their full attention to understanding the messages that are being communicated, without the pressure to imitate or respond immediately.

Affective Filter Hypothesis

A fifth hypothesis Krashen presents describes the *affective filter*, a highly visual term for a phenomenon that has been observed in all forms of education. Children and adults alike are known to resist learning when learning is unpleasant, painful, or being attempted in a punitive environment. Students' ability to learn more readily those things they want to learn is well recognized. Krashen relates these experiences to language acquisition by describing a filter that the brain erects to block out second language input, no matter how carefully designed that input may be. The filter goes up in the presence of anxiety or low self-confidence or in the absence of motivation. The filter goes down and the input can come through when motivation is high, when a student is self-confident, and when the learning takes place in a relatively anxiety-free environment. The filter plays an important role in planning lessons for adult learners, to whom a major source of anxiety is the pressure to speak a second language early in the learning experience. Although most children seem not to have the same anxiety about speaking in a foreign language, an environment in which children feel self-confident, free, and highly motivated is certainly desirable.

Conditions for Second Language Acquisition

According to Krashen and other researchers, language acquisition takes place most effectively when the input is meaningful and interesting to the learner, when it is comprehensible ($i + 1$), and when it is not grammatically sequenced. These ideas contrast sharply with some practices that have been common in language teaching. Language acquisition theory suggests that the language to which learners are exposed should be as natural as possible—that the past tense, for example, should not be postponed until students are able to analyze the past tense themselves. The key factor in the usefulness of input is whether or not it is comprehended. In general, the grammatical details of a message do not have as much impact on comprehensibility as do the context surrounding the message and the vocabulary with which the message is communicated, especially in the early stages of language acquisition.

Michael Long (1983) and others suggest that acquisition takes place best in a setting in which meaning is negotiated through interaction, so that the student has influence on the message being communicated. Of course, the

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greater the language skills of the listener, the more effectively the interaction can influence the message. This suggests to the teacher that there must be early attention to providing students with the ability to communicate messages such as these: "I don't understand"; "Could you please repeat that?"; "Did you mean that . . .?"; "Could you please speak more slowly?"; and so forth.

Comprehensible Output

Merrill Swain (1985) has taken Krashen's idea one step further with her suggestion that students acquire language most meaningfully when they also have the opportunity for comprehensible "output." That is, they need to have a setting in which their attempts at communication are valued and shaped to make them acceptable and understandable, through communicative rather than grammatical means of correction. There is mounting evidence to suggest that direct error correction has little or no influence on the accuracy of messages (Dulay, Burt, Krashen 1982). Correction that responds to the *meaning* of a message, however, has a much greater likelihood of making a difference for the speaker. Frequently correcting grammatical errors and

THE FAMILY CIRCUS.

By Bil Keane



"You corrected my English so much I forgot what I was goin' to say!"

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interrupting to prod for accuracy tends to shift students' attention away from the message being communicated and to inhibit their willingness to speak.

Use of Language

In a classroom designed to encourage second language acquisition, there will be an emphasis on communication. The teacher will provide students with an environment in which they are surrounded by messages in the target language which communicate interesting, relevant information—in language they are able to understand, language that is comprehensible to them. The teacher will use natural language, not contrived language intended to incorporate all the most recently-learned grammar points. It will differ, however, from the language which the teacher might use with a native-speaking peer, in the same way that the language a mother might use with a young child who is just beginning to speak differs from the language she uses with her peers. Part of creating comprehensible input for language acquirers consists of using strategies for making the message understood, variously known as "motherese," "caretaker speech," "teacherese," or "foreigner talk." Some of the characteristics of this speech, as it occurs naturally, are the following:

1. A somewhat slower rate of speech (still with the normal rate of speech for that speaker, but at the lower end of the range).
2. More distinct pronunciation (not distorted pronunciation, which actually changes the sounds of the language). For example, most American speakers of English pronounce the *tt* in the word *letter* as if it were spelled *dd*. When asked to pronounce clearly, they often change their pronunciation of the sound to "tt," thus distorting the language through an attempt to pronounce it "accurately." Such distortions are not in the long-range best interests of the learner.
3. Shorter, less complex sentences.
4. More rephrasing and repetition.
5. More frequent meaning checks with the hearer to make sure that he or she is understanding.
6. Use of gesture and visual reinforcement.
7. Greater use of concrete referents.

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE BRAIN

The study of the brain and intensive work in cognitive psychology have resulted in a significant shift in orientation away from the behaviorist

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principles that once dominated educational thought and practice. Rote learning, habit formation, and observable outcomes are being replaced by an emphasis on meaningfulness, metacognition, and process. For the behavioral psychologist, the student is considered to be a relatively passive subject, to be manipulated through reinforcement techniques and drill. The cognitive psychologist, in contrast, sees students as active participants in the learning situation, controlling and shaping their own learning processes. In the behaviorist classroom the student responds to stimuli and reinforcement, while in the classroom based on cognitive psychology the students' own internal motivation drives the learning process. One of the most important principles of cognitive psychology for the foreign language teacher is that information is best learned and retained if it is made meaningful to students.

Glover and Bruning (1987) have summarized six major principles of cognitive psychology as they relate to instruction:

1. Students are active processors of information.
2. Learning is most likely to occur when information is made meaningful to students.
3. How students learn may be more important than what they learn.
4. Cognitive processes become automatic with repeated use.
5. Metacognitive skills can be developed through instruction.
6. The most enduring motivation for learning is internal motivation.
7. There are vast differences in students' information-processing abilities.

Elementary school foreign language teachers can apply these principles in the classroom as they engage their students in meaningful situations and make them full participants in the communication of the classroom. They can work together with teachers across the curriculum to help children understand what it is they need to learn and how their own learning best takes place—to help children become aware of the process of language acquisition and to enjoy their own progress. At the very beginning of a language sequence, for example, children can learn the importance of paying careful attention to both the language and the context in which it occurs, a first step in the process of understanding their own learning.

Attention to cognitive processes has also resulted in a new appreciation of the variety of learning styles and learning rates present in every classroom. James Asher (1986) developed his Total Physical Response approach (TPR) to language teaching as a response to the different tasks performed by the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Students respond with physical activity to increasingly complex teacher commands, and they are not expected to speak until they feel ready. TPR was intended to encourage use of right-

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hemisphere processes, which some have theorized to be more open to the new habits that foreign language study requires. Others have advocated the use of music, rhythm, drama, and games as methods to stimulate the right hemisphere and thus facilitate language acquisition.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The teaching of children has been profoundly affected by the work of Jean Piaget, who identified four stages of cognitive and affective development in childhood and adolescence. The child develops cognitively through active involvement with the environment, and each new step in development builds on and becomes integrated with previous steps. Because two of the four developmental stages normally occur during the elementary school years, it is important for language teachers working with children to keep the characteristics of each cognitive stage in mind (Wadsworth 1984: 26-7). They are as follows:

1. *The stage of sensory-motor intelligence (0 to 2 years).* During this stage, behavior is primarily motor. The child does not yet internally represent events and "think" conceptually, though "cognitive" development is seen as schemata are constructed.
2. *The stage of preoperational thought (2 to 7 years).* This stage is characterized by the development of language and other forms of representation and rapid conceptual development. Reasoning during this stage is prelogical or semilogical, and children tend to be very egocentric.
3. *The stage of concrete operations (7 to 11 years).* During these years, the child develops the ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems.
4. *The stage of formal operations (11 to 15 years or older).* During this stage, the child's cognitive structures reach their greatest level of development, and the child becomes able to apply logical reasoning to all classes of problems.

The thinking skills of most children in elementary school foreign language programs are at the concrete stage, and experience plays a major role in all learning. Piaget points out that children are not simply miniature adults who have less experience and thus less knowledge to work with as they approach problems and new situations. They do not think like adults because their minds are not like adult minds. It is the privilege of the elementary school teacher to share their world and learn to work with it. Characteristics of children as learners at different ages and implications for foreign language teaching are described below.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL LEARNERS

Preschool Students (ages 2 to 4)

These students are in a sensitive period for language development. They absorb languages effortlessly and are adept imitators of speech sounds. Because they are very self-centered, they do not work well in groups, and they respond best to activities and learning situations relating to their own interests and experiences. Although they have a short attention span, they have great patience for repetition of the same activity or game. Preschoolers respond well to concrete experiences and to large-motor involvement in language learning.

Primary Students (ages 5 to 7): Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2

Most of these children are still preoperational, and they learn best with concrete experiences and immediate goals. They like to name objects, define words, and learn about things in their own world. Primary-age children learn through oral language; they are capable of developing good oral skills, pronunciation, and intonation when they have a good model. They learn well, especially beginning in first grade, through dramatic play and role play. Because of their short attention spans, they need to have a great variety of activities, but the teacher must keep in mind that children of this age tire easily. They require large-muscle activity, and they are still rather unskilled with small-muscle tasks. Teachers of primary students must give very structured and specific directions and build regular routines and patterns into the daily lesson plan.

Intermediate Students (ages 8 to 10): Grades 3, 4, and 5

Children at this age are at a maximum of openness to people and situations different from their own experience. For these students, a global emphasis is extremely important, because it gives them an opportunity to work with information from all parts of the world. As intermediates develop the cognitive characteristics of the concrete operations stage, they begin to understand cause and effect. Students in intermediate grades can work well in groups. They can begin a more systematic approach to language learning, but they continue to need first-hand, concrete experiences as a starting point and continue to benefit from learning that is embedded in context. The phenom-

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enon of "boy germs" and "girl germs" begins to develop during these years, and children may resist partner situations with children of the opposite sex.

Transescent Students (ages 11 to 14): Grades 6, 7, and 8

During the middle school and junior high school years, students are undergoing more dramatic developmental changes than experienced at any other time in life, and on widely differing timetables. The transescent must learn to deal with a variety of experiences: emerging sexuality in a changing and often unpredictable body; reaching a cognitive plateau for a time, and then finding new, adult intellectual tools; multiplying and rapidly shifting interests; a fluid and flexible self-concept; a need to rework interpersonal relationships with adults; turbulent emotions; extreme idealism; a need to assert independence; and a powerful peer group. A major goal of all schooling for children of this age is the encouragement of positive relationships and positive self-image. Transescent children need the opportunity for broad exploration, as well as an introduction to the demands of academic disciplines.

SUMMARY

Teachers of languages for elementary school children can draw on a variety of resources as they seek to gain greater insight into their task. Second language acquisition theory, brain research, cognitive psychology, and information about child development all contribute to a greater understanding of languages and children. Information in these areas is always evolving and is subject to new questions and interpretations as understanding of human development and the mind continues to change and grow. Each teacher will find individualized ways to use theoretical insights to enhance language learning for the children of each classroom.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What can the elementary school foreign language teacher do to create a classroom climate that promotes language acquisition? Identify specific actions and techniques that will be helpful.
2. How can the teacher plan a lesson to make sure the language presented will be comprehensible to the students? How can the classroom environment contribute to comprehension?
3. How might an awareness of current theories of brain functioning influence how you plan a language class?
4. Choose a topic or a lesson (such as animal foods, geography) that could

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be of interest to children at several age levels and explain how you would approach it differently at each of three different levels:

- a. Kindergarten
- b. Grade 3
- c. Grade 6 or 7

FOR FURTHER READING

The following sources are recommended for additional information about material covered in this chapter. Chapter citations are documented in *Works Cited* at the end of the volume.

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ACTIVITIES

PART I
FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

ACTIVITY 1

Caregiver Speech - First language development

As you have just seen in the video program, caregiver speech plays an important role in both first and second language acquisition. Caregivers and second/foreign language teachers have been observed modifying their speech with young children and students. The characteristics of caregiver speech include:

- o slower rate of speech; simpler vocabulary and sentence structure than in normal speech with adults
- o reference to "the here and now"
- o emphasis on meaning over form
- o extension and elaboration

1. Review the portion of the video program which highlights caregiver speech during the interaction between the mother and her child. Note the examples given for each of the characteristics of caregiver speech.

Now, eavesdrop on a caregiver and a young child interacting to see if you can identify other examples of the four characteristics of caregiver speech highlighted in the program. If you don't know anyone with younger children, you might observe common, everyday exchanges that may contain examples of caregiver speech in a kindergarten or preschool class, a toy store, a library, a grocery store checkout line, or a restaurant.

2. Read and discuss a simple story in English with a younger child (5 years old or younger). Did you find yourself using caregiver speech? If so, why do you think you are adjusting your speech? Did anyone have to tell you how to do it? If you didn't find yourself adjusting your speech, why not?

ACTIVITY 1 - continued

Caregiver Speech - First language development

Do your answers to any of these questions point to a rationale for using caregiver speech with younger children and students in elementary foreign language immersion classrooms?

PART II
SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Caregiver Speech
Comprehensible Input
Contextualized Language
Stretch Language

ACTIVITY 2

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

In Activity 1, you examined the four characteristics of caregiver speech and their role in first language acquisition. Caregiver speech has the same four characteristics in the foreign language classroom, and continues to play a role as students' proficiency in the second/foreign language grows. Teachers whose students have little experience in the second language will use language that contains all four characteristics of caregiver speech, with special emphasis on focusing on the here and now and simplification of language. Teachers whose students have more experience in the second/foreign language tend to focus on extension and elaboration to stretch students' language. Thus, while caregiver speech initially may be slower and simpler than everyday speech among adults, it is important for caregivers to adjust their language to their students' growing proficiency. Instead of simplifying their vocabulary and syntax, teachers of more proficient students use more refined and more specific vocabulary, and tend to use more complex and diverse structures. This elaboration of language is important for the continued growth of students' language skills.

On the following page, is a list of the four characteristics of caregiver speech with examples you might observe in a Grade 1 class where students have limited proficiency in the foreign language. Compare these with examples given from a Grade 6 class where students have more experience in the second language.

ACTIVITY 2 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Focus on the here and now

Grade 1

During a social studies lesson from the unit "People Need Shelter," the teacher shows students a model of an apartment building and a model of a single family dwelling, as examples of shelters students identified in the school's neighborhood. She compares the two models saying, "This is a house and this is an apartment building, isn't it. Let's look at the house and the apartment building. How are they the same and how are they different? Both the house and the apartment building have windows (pointing them out on the models). The apartment building is tall and the house is short (pointing out the height on each model).

Grade 6

During a social studies lesson from the unit on Ancient Egypt, as the teacher demonstrates how to construct an illustrated time line organized around important names in Egyptian history, she points to several illustrations in a text saying, "Here is a picture of Alexander the Great and one of Cleopatra. You can use these to make your group's illustrations for the time line. What are some other resources for illustrations that you can use?"

Slower and simpler

Grade 1

During a discussion about different types of shelters, the teacher states, "Let's review. Schools are shelters, libraries are shelters, and garages are shelters." (underlined words indicate more emphasis and carefully articulated words).

Grade 6

During a discussion about the occupations that were important in Ancient Egypt, the teacher states, "This is a picture of a scribe working in the temple. Notice his tools: a stylus and papyrus." (underlined words indicate more emphasis and carefully articulated words)

ACTIVITY 2 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Focus on meaning over form

Grade 1

During a discussion about different types of shelters, a student describes a library as, "Library...stories and lots of books." The teacher accepts this definition, restating it, "That's right, a library is a shelter that has many books."

Grade 6

During a discussion about the important role of social structure in Ancient Egyptian villages, a student states, "Noblemen are most important as officials in Ancient Egypt." The teacher accepts this statement as factually correct, restating it: "You're right. Noblemen were important officials in Ancient Egypt's social structure."

Extension and expansion

Grade 1

During a discussion about different types of shelters, a student says, "You know, the place where they have trucks for fires."

The teacher replies, "Oh yes, the fire station is a shelter. They have fire engines, and firemen and special equipment for putting out fires."

Grade 6

During a discussion about the different social strata of Ancient Egyptian society and their responsibilities, a student says, "One of the governor's jobs was to check up on those ditches, you know the ones that the farmers used to send water around." The teacher replies, "Do you mean the irrigation ditches?" Student, "Yes, irrigation ditches." Teacher, "OK, the governor was responsible for checking on the irrigation ditches, but why? Why were the irrigation ditches so important? What was their function?"

ACTIVITY 2 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

1. If possible, observe an immersion class and note examples of each of the four characteristics of caregiver speech.

GRADE _____

Caregiver Speech

Example

Focus on the here and now

Slower and simpler

Focus on meaning over form

Extension and expansion

2. Imagine that you are teaching a social studies lesson to a Grade 1 class from the unit "People Need Clothing." In your immersion language, note on the following page a possible example for each of the four characteristics of caregiver speech and how it would help students grasp the meaning of what you are saying. In this particular lesson, you are describing a winter day to students. After you present students with a collection of clothes, they will choose appropriate items to dress themselves on a winter day for school.

ACTIVITY 2 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

GRADE _____

Caregiver Speech

Example

Focus on the here and now

Slower and simpler

Focus on meaning over form

Extension and expansion

3. Now, let's think about how these four categories of caregiver speech might be used in an upper-grade classroom. Imagine that you are teaching a social studies lesson to a Grade 6 class from the unit "Mediterranean Studies, Ancient Egypt." In this particular lesson, you are describing products of the Ancient Egyptian economy. Specifically, the surplus goods in Ancient Egypt that you present to the class might include pottery, furniture, wool, glass, jewelry, linen, and ivory; and goods needed from Egyptian trading partners might include grain, tools, sheep, cloth, fish, marble, gold, and lumber. In your immersion language, how would you use caregiver speech to help students grasp the meaning of what you are saying? Try to identify an example for each of the four categories of caregiver speech. Note your examples on the following page.

ACTIVITY 2 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

GRADE_____

Caregiver Speech

Example

GRADE_____

Focus on the here and now

Slower and simpler

Focus on meaning over form

Extension and expansion

ACTIVITY 3

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Contextualized language

What is context and why is it important to second/foreign language learners?

Context is the setting that surrounds language which may include both linguistic and/or physical clues about what is being communicated. These clues support the meaning of a message. Physical clues include real objects and representations of objects (e.g., pictures) which are directly or indirectly referred to by a speaker. When teachers refer to physical clues, beginning students usually are able to understand what the teacher is saying. Linguistic clues are contained in the message and make the meaning more precise. Linguistic clues are primarily useful to students who have some proficiency in the second language.

When language is contextualized by support from many physical clues it is usually understood by students who have little second language proficiency. Decontextualized language is language which is not supported by clues available to the listener. An example of contextualized language in a beginning immersion classroom during a social studies lesson would be a teacher pointing to a collection of "goods" (a small scale model of a car, a pair of shoes, and a vacuum cleaner) saying, "These items--the car, the shoes, and the vacuum cleaner-- are things that we can buy (teacher displays money). We call them 'goods.'" In contrast, an example of decontextualized language in the same situation might be when the teacher says, "Cars, shoes, and vacuum cleaners are things that we can buy. We call them 'goods.'" The teacher in the second example has not made available to students any clues that support the meaning of what is being said.

ACTIVITY 3 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Contextualized language

Think about your experiences in acquiring another language. When you are just beginning to learn a language, the availability of physical clues usually makes messages understandable and also helps you make yourself understood more easily. When only linguistic clues are available, understanding messages is more difficult, if not impossible. In contrast, when discussing a topic in a language in which you have a high level of proficiency, linguistic clues are usually sufficient for you to understand what someone is saying.

Contextualized language in elementary foreign language immersion classrooms means use of clues that are either physical or linguistic in nature. Beginning students rely heavily on physical clues to support the meaning of what you're saying. That is, you, the teacher must provide students with multiple opportunities to match what they hear with what they see. When deciding on the need for use of contextualized language with upper elementary students, careful assessment of students' level of language proficiency and their familiarity with concepts being taught is critical. These two factors will help you determine how many physical clues and how many linguistic clues more proficient students will need to have sufficient context for understanding.

ACTIVITY 3 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Contextualized language

The immersion classroom must be equipped with many real objects, and representation of objects (e.g., pictures). Linguistic clues should also be exploited to reinforce and recycle language previously learned. For example, a Grade 1 teacher describing different types of clothing, might show a pair of pants and say, "These are pants," (showing the item). "They are just like shorts," (previously learned vocabulary) "except they have 'long legs'," (previously learned vocabulary, reinforced with a gesture). "Pants don't have short legs, like the shorts."

Immersion teachers must take every opportunity available to make sure that communications are "placed" within the available context so that students understand both the concept being taught and the language being used to communicate the concept. A kindergarten teacher introducing students to the concepts of "big" and "small" must be sure to use consistently the same two words for "big" and "small" and to provide multiple examples of the same two items in a big and small format. A series of objects might include a big car and a small car; a big ball and a small ball; and a big shoe and a small shoe.

The following exercises have been selected to help you determine the extent to which contextualized language might be needed in a variety of situations.

ACTIVITY 3 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Contextualized language

- 1a. Imagine that you are in a foreign country. Your proficiency level with the country's primary language is minimal. You want to make an appointment to see a doctor. You can either make your appointment by telephone or you can walk down the street and make the appointment in person. Which way would you make your appointment? Why?
- 1b. One evening, in the same country, as you are dining alone in a restaurant, you begin to eavesdrop on two conversations. You are able to understand that conversation number one is about nuclear physics; conversation number two is about a film that you recently saw. Which conversation would be easier to follow? Why? Can you identify the reasons why you think that one conversation would be easier for you to understand than the other?
- 1c. The same evening, as choices of entertainment, you can either listen to a radio broadcast of a play or go see a film. Which one would you select? Why?
2. As an immersion teacher, your use of contextualized language is critical to students' understanding. Language in schools is closely tied to the curriculum and thus, as students progress from grade to grade, language becomes increasingly complex, more abstract and potentially less tied to physical, contextual clues. Keep in mind that beginning students require

ACTIVITY 3 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Contextualized language

primarily physical clues to understand language while more proficient students may benefit from a mixture of linguistic clues and physical clues in order to understand. Select one of the performance objectives below, or substitute a performance objective from your local school district's curriculum. First, list the language (vocabulary, expressions, and functions) you will need to teach these concepts. Then indicate how you will support the meaning of the language you will use.

Grade 1 social studies unit: PEOPLE AS PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

Performance objective: Differentiate between needs and wants.

Grade 5 social studies unit: THIRTEEN COLONIES BECOME A NATION

**Performance objective: List the main ideas expressed in the Declaration
of Independence**

ACTIVITY 4

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Comprehensible input

Comprehensible input refers to messages that are understandable by the listener. Krashen states, "The crucial question [is]: How do we acquire? The best hypothesis now, the one that fits the data the most accurately, is that we acquire in just one way--by understanding messages or by obtaining *comprehensible input*. More specifically, we acquire a new rule by understanding messages that contain this new rule. This is done with the aid of extralinguistic context, knowledge of the world, and our previous linguistic competence."

(Krashen, Stephen D. Inquiries & Insights. Hayward, CA.: Janus Book Publishers, Inc., 1985, page 9.) He further states, "...we acquire by *understanding* language that is "a little beyond" our current level of competence. ... (In more formal terms, if an acquirer is at stage *i* in acquisition, he can progress to stage *i* + 1 by understanding input at that level of complexity.)." (Krashen, Stephen D. Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1981, Page 102-103).

Let's examine Krashen's formula "*i* + 1". The "*i*" is the level of understanding at which the student is now and the "+1" is language that is just a bit above the student's present level. As a teacher, your use of physical clues (such as real objects and representations of objects such as pictures) helps make language more understandable to students. Your use of language that is just a bit above students' present level provides motivation and opportunity for growth as students "stretch" to understand.

ACTIVITY 4 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Comprehensible Input

The use of contextualized language is a critical element in providing comprehensible input as you use language that is just a bit beyond students' level of understanding, or at the "+ 1" level. Without context you will run the risk of students not understanding or misunderstanding your communications.

1. Reflect on your experiences as a foreign language learner. What helps you understand when someone speaks a language you don't know well? What makes it harder for you to understand?
2. Review the two versions of the Farsi lesson presented in the video program. Note below the differences between Farsi lesson 1 and lesson 2. What helped you to understand what the lesson was about? Be sure to observe and note specific teacher techniques as you review these lessons. If possible, discuss your observations with your colleagues.

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

3. Thinking about comprehensible input, take a moment to consider the situations listed below. Assume each of them is conducted in a language in which you have limited proficiency. As a foreign language learner with limited proficiency, note which ones would be most comprehensible for you. Which ones would be most difficult for you to understand? Rate each situation using the scale of 1 through 4, found on the following page.

ACTIVITY 4 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Comprehensible Input

1=very easy to understand

2=somewhat easy to understand

3=difficult to understand

4=very difficult to understand

How could you modify those situations that you judge "very difficult to understand" so that that they are more comprehensible? If possible, discuss your ratings with a colleague.

- ☐ ____ Attending a live debate between two members of a governing body of a foreign country
- ☐ ____ Participating in a guided tour of a museum that highlights well-known artists from the 19th century
- ☐ ____ Going shopping with a friend for a birthday present
- ☐ ____ Preparing a meal with a friend
- ☐ ____ Buying a train ticket at the station
- ☐ ____ Requesting specific time schedules for travel via public transportation by telephone
- ☐ ____ Attending a play
- ☐ ____ Attending a lecture on a topic you know well
- ☐ ____ Attending a lecture on a topic you don't know well
- ☐ ____ Participating in a cooking lesson
- ☐ ____ Viewing a film on airplane engine repair
- ☐ ____ Learning how to play a new card game

ACTIVITY 4 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Comprehensible Input

4. Think about possible classroom situations in a beginning immersion class.

What kinds of things will you need to communicate to students (e.g., guidelines for homework, fire drill procedures, the concept of rhythm)?

Note below how easy or difficult you think each situation is to understand.

☐ Very easy to understand

☐ Somewhat easy to understand

☐ Difficult to understand

☐ Very difficult to understand

PART III
SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Output

Test Hypotheses

Encourage Speaking

Role of Grammar Instruction

Role of Error Correction

ACTIVITY 5

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Modeling more sophisticated language to stretch students' language

As you examine the characteristics and role of caregiver speech in second language acquisition, you will want to keep in mind that your speech will change as students gain more experience with the second/foreign language. That is, as students become more proficient in the language, you will be adjusting your language or your input to the age and language skills of your students.

When considering how best to "stretch" student language skills, it is important to recall Krashen's definition of comprehensible input and his formula " $i + 1$ ", as discussed in Activity 4, page 65. Krashen's formula is another way of describing elaboration of language.

Two considerations that will help you provide students with comprehensible input and promote continued language growth are:

- o the students' level of understanding of the foreign language
- o your use of language that is just a bit beyond students' level of understanding

Your use of increasingly refined vocabulary and increasing complex sentence structures will provide students with a more sophisticated language model. Your language model will provide students with the tools to use the same or similar language.

ACTIVITY 5 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Modeling more sophisticated language to stretch students' language

Keep in mind that natural, spontaneous speech is an important aspect of all elementary foreign language immersion classrooms. However, teachers whose students have little experience in the second language tend to use simpler vocabulary and shorter, simpler sentences than do teachers whose students have more experience in the second language.

Let's contrast the use of simple vocabulary with the use of more refined vocabulary. In most cases, as a teacher of students new to a foreign language, you would probably use the word "dog" to refer to all dogs, unless special circumstances, such as a story, require the use of a more specialized name of a particular breed of dogs. As a teacher whose students have more foreign language experience, you would tend to use the names of specific breeds of dogs. As another example of the use of simple versus refined vocabulary, let's consider a social studies lesson. During a discussion with students new to a foreign language about where food comes from, you would talk about "farming and farms." In contrast, during a discussion about food sources during colonial times with more proficient students, you would talk about the role of "subsistence agriculture."

ACTIVITY 5 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Modeling more sophisticated language to stretch students' language

Let's compare the use of short and simple sentences with the use of more complex sentences. During a science lesson with students new to a second/foreign language, you would use simple sentences to describe and to compare objects that float and objects that sink. During such a lesson your exchanges with students might include statements and questions such as:

"Look at the branch."
"Does it float?"
"Does it sink?"
"Yes, it floats."
"Why do you think it floats?" or "Why?"
"Is it heavy?"
"Is it light?"

In a class where students are more proficient in the second/foreign language, you would use more complex sentence structure to observe and to define chemical changes. For example, during a Grade 5 science lesson, your exchanges with students might include statements and questions such as:

"Who can describe what happened to the nail in the bowl of water on day 4 of the investigation?"
"The reddish-brown substance in the water is called rust or iron oxide."
"Iron oxide is the scientific term for rust."
"What do you think caused the change in the nail?"
"Can someone formulate a hypothesis about how or why this change came about?"

ACTIVITY 5 - continued

Language Speech - Second language acquisition

Modeling more sophisticated language to stretch students' language

The following activities have been designed to involve you in thinking about the importance of your role as you model different types of language for students and different ways to stretch students' language.

1. Imagine that your Grade 1 students have limited proficiency in the second language. The science unit for the month of October focuses on "Matter." The objective states that students will be able to identify differences between living and nonliving things. On page 75 is a list of possible language you might use while teaching this unit. Keeping in mind that simpler vocabulary and sentences are used most frequently with beginning students, mark a plus (+) next to statements that you believe would be best to use with Grade 1 students and a minus (-) next to statements that you could use, but which might be too abstract or sophisticated for students new to the second language. As you make your selections, make a mental note of your reasons for each selection. If possible, discuss your choices with a colleague.

ACTIVITY 5 - continued

Caregiver Speech - Second language acquisition

Modeling more sophisticated language to stretch students' language

- ☐ Living things need food
- ☐ Living things must take in or make food to maintain systems
- ☐ Living things need oxygen
- ☐ Living things must have oxygen in order to support the various cell structures and systems that comprise the organism
- ☐ Living things reproduce
- ☐ Reproduction is part of the life cycle and helps to assure continuation of the species
- ☐ Living things grow
- ☐ Living things pass through various stages of growth and development as they mature
- ☐ Living things die
- ☐ Living things die when the life cycle is complete
- ☐ Some living things can move by themselves
- ☐ Some living things have the capacity to move. The type of locomotion is determined by physical characteristics and is often influenced by the environment inhabited by a particular creature

ACTIVITY 6

Student output - Second language acquisition

Opportunities for students to test hypotheses about how the second language works

Students develop understanding of the immersion language because you, the teacher, surround them with contextualized language or comprehensible input. Because understanding is not enough, students must be given many opportunities to try out their new language.

As students try different ways of communicating in their new language, they are testing out their hypotheses about how they think the language works. A student with limited proficiency might pronounce the words "bus stop" with a Spanish accent because she is hypothesizing that "bus stop" is a cognate. Students' hypothesis testing is part of a process called the **negotiation of meaning**. This process is one by which participants in an interaction arrive at understanding through a variety of communication strategies. **Negotiation of meaning** in the classroom is when teachers and students work together to make sure they understand each other. It's the give and take as they ask each other questions, discuss ideas, and share their thoughts. Students need as many opportunities as possible to talk in the second/foreign language classroom negotiating the meaning of what they want to say and practicing how to say it.

ACTIVITY 6 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Students need opportunities to test hypotheses to find out how language works

As students begin to express their ideas, thoughts, and questions in the second language, they are testing their hypotheses about how they think the language works. Your direct and indirect feedback about how well you understand their communications, lets students know if their hypotheses about the language are accurate. Direct feedback to students may take the form of a statement such as, "I don't understand you," accompanied by gestures and a facial expression that also communicate your lack of understanding. This feedback may result in a student showing you an object, a picture, or making a gesture to help you understand. You can then model the language the student was searching for. Students come to realize that their hypothesis about how to say "bus stop," for example, needs revising to "parada de autobús."

Indirect feedback may consist of your inappropriate action or response, letting the student know that what he said was not what he thought he said. For example, imagine that in reply to your question, "Where is the stapler?" a student replies, "On the desk." As you walk towards your desk, the student says, "No, it's over there." (pointing to the bookshelf). You would probably comment, "Oh, you mean the bookshelf—not the desk." Your movement towards the desk would be the indirect feedback that let this student know that the wrong word for "bookshelf" had been used. Your use of the correct word for "bookshelf" will provide input to the students so that they may revise their hypothesis about how to say "bookshelf." Classmates, as well as other speakers of the second language play a similar role in providing direct and indirect feedback to students' hypotheses testing in their new language.

ACTIVITY 6 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Students need opportunities to test hypotheses to find out how language works

The following exercises have been designed to provide you with opportunities to reflect on classroom activities that promote opportunities for students to test hypotheses and to negotiate the meaning of what they are trying to communicate.

1. As students make more and more of an effort to communicate in the second language, your role as a sensitive listener is an important factor in providing students with additional opportunities to talk in class. As a sensitive listener your understanding and expansion of students' communications may be expanded through thoughtful use of:
 - o questions
 - o meaning checks (Pointing to a picture, the teacher says, "When you say "animal," do you mean that you think this brown dog is the one that ate the steak?)
 - o requests for clarification (Pointing to a picture, the teacher says, "Which dog do you mean, the brown one or the black one?")

Your use of questions, meaning checks, and requests for clarification will encourage students to make the meaning of what they are trying to say more precise.

ACTIVITY 6 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Students need opportunities to test hypotheses to find out how language works

Consider the following two teacher-student interactions. Which of the two teachers uses questions, meaning checks, and requests for clarification more effectively to encourage students' language use?

Exchange 1:

Teacher 1: Let's review our discussion about dairy products from yesterday. Who would like to show me a picture of a dairy product?"

Student: (pointing to picture of a cow): "Cow."

Teacher 1: "No, Ann, a cow is not a dairy product."

Exchange 2:

Teacher 2: Let's review our discussion about dairy products from yesterday. Who would like to show me a picture of a dairy product?"

Student: (pointing to picture of a cow): "Cow."

Teacher 2: "Oh, do you mean that the cow gives us milk?"

Student: "Yes...gives us milk." (Student has repeated this sentence fragment spontaneously, not at the teacher's request.)

Teacher 2: "Sam is right! The cow gives us milk. Now where should we place the picture of the milk—in the circle labeled DAIRY PRODUCTS or in the circle labeled OTHER PRODUCTS?"

Student: (placing picture of milk in the circle labeled DAIRY PRODUCTS) "Milk...dairy products."

Teacher 2: (nodding approval) "Milk is a dairy product. Now, where should we place the picture of the cow, in the circle labeled DAIRY PRODUCTS or in the circle labeled OTHER PRODUCTS?"

Student: (pointing to the circle labeled OTHER PRODUCTS) "No, dairy products."

ACTIVITY 6 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Students need opportunities to test hypotheses to find out how language works

2. Your role as a sensitive listener will also help you informally gather information about areas of strong background knowledge and/or particular interests of your students. For example, in your Grade 1 class during "Show and Tell," you discover that a shy student has an interest in fish, stemming from a large fresh water aquarium at home. Or, in your Grade 6 class you detect through a student's entries in individual journals and casual conversation that an underachieving student has a keen interest and extensive knowledge of football.

Consider several areas of the Grade 1 and Grade 6 curriculum listed below. Note ways in which you might use the curriculum to encourage each of these students to increase oral and written participation in class. Think about how and when you might model language related to their interests for them and then provide opportunities for them to use language tapping their background knowledge.

GRADE 1 **READING**

LANGUAGE ARTS

Experience stories
Short narratives
Folk tales
Experience reports

SCIENCE

Living/nonliving
Food
Aquarium
Simple food chain

MATH

Counting and graphs
Concepts of addition and subtraction
Measurement - length and weight
Problem solving

ACTIVITY 6 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Students need opportunities to test hypotheses to find out how language works

GRADE 6

READING

LANGUAGE ARTS

Short narratives
Novels
Legends
Textbook and
tradebook prose
Reference, news
and feature articles
Advertisements
Game directions
Directions for filling
out forms

SOCIAL STUDIES

Mediterranean Civilizations:
Egypt, Greece, Rome
Africa

MATH

Whole number
operations
Ratios
Geometry and
measurement
Decimal fractions
Fractions and
percent
Multiplying
fractions, area,
and geometry
Data analysis
Number relationships
Common and decimal
fractions
Solving problems

3a. Prefabricated language is language that provides students with needed "tools" to enter more easily into conversations as students test their hypotheses about the foreign language. One type of prefabricated language consists of whole expressions that may be used in a variety of situations to manage a conversation. For example, when students use an expression such as "I don't understand.", they may be trying to let you know that you may be:

- o talking too fast
- o using language that is too abstract, that is, language not supported by physical clues
- o presenting a concept in an unclear fashion

ACTIVITY 6 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Students need opportunities to test hypotheses to find out how language works

As students develop a repertoire of prefabricated language, they will have the tools with which to speak more easily and perhaps more willingly in class. Can you think of other expressions such as "I don't understand," that students could use to manage conversations in the foreign language?

3b. Prefabricated language is also language that students may transfer from one situation to another such as question starters. Some examples are:

May I go to _____?
Est-ce que je peux aller à _____?
¿Puedo ir a _____?

Please pass me the _____.
Passe-moi un _____, s'il
te plaît.
Pásame un _____,
por favor.

Make a list of other examples of prefabricated language in your immersion language that students might transfer easily to a variety of situations. If possible, compare your examples with colleagues who teach in the same immersion language.

ACTIVITY 7

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of grammar instruction

Research studies indicate that immersion is a very effective method of teaching a second/foreign language. In fact, immersion students achieve a higher level of foreign language proficiency than students studying a foreign language through any other approach. However, students do make errors, many of which are not the kind that would be made by native speakers. Research results indicate that while immersion students develop native-like comprehension skills (listening and reading), their productive skills (speaking and writing) are not native-like.

These results heighten the importance of deciding how you will make decisions about the role of grammar instruction in your immersion classroom. Should there be grammar instruction in immersion classrooms? If so, what is the best way to go about teaching grammar? In the course of students' elementary school career, when is the best time to teach grammar? What is the best way to teach grammar--in isolation or in conjunction with other areas of the curriculum?

These are questions that you will face in your classroom on a daily basis. While there is disagreement among the experts about what exactly is the role of grammar instruction, most teachers agree that it is necessary to instruct students in how the language works.

ACTIVITY 7 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of grammar instruction

While no research studies provide definitive answers to these questions, some immersion program experiences seem to indicate that certain approaches to teaching grammar appear to produce better results than others.

Some school districts have developed a foreign language/arts curriculum that outlines when to teach which language structures. This curriculum provides guidelines for teachers to consult at different levels of instruction. It puts in place a foreign language/arts strand that promotes students' continuous development of linguistic tools for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The availability of a foreign language arts curriculum, taught with and through other areas of the curriculum, is an effective way to integrate two areas of the curriculum. Grammar points are made more meaningful as they are tied to understanding and expression of ideas in a meaningful context.

Let's take a look at an example of how the foreign language curriculum might be integrated with instruction in another area of the curriculum. Imagine that you and your Grade 5 class are developing a timeline in social studies to sequence important events that led to the American Revolution. As you are planning, you note that the language/arts guidelines suggest that students in Grade 4 worked extensively on the formation and utilization of the simple past verb tense. In Grade 5 you note that you will be working extensively with students on the use of the perfect verb tense. You recall that as you and your class began to sequence and record events on the time line, most students were using the simple past tense most of the time, even though they use the imperfect tense easily during conversation.

ACTIVITY 7 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of grammar instruction

During the social studies lessons, as you continue to work on the time line, you begin to draw students' attention to the different uses of the two verb tenses. You also integrate instruction about formation and use of these two verb tenses during science, reading/language arts, and mathematical problem solving. As you integrate this grammar instruction with other subjects, students will have access to language models that they may begin to copy and use. The various areas of the curriculum will provide you with multiple opportunities to help students differentiate meaning expressed by each verb tense. Students will also be encouraged to begin to use these two tenses as they discuss and write about different topics.

Whatever your decisions about the role of grammar instruction, it is a topic that must be discussed and decided on by your local school district in order to develop a plan of action and to have a clear statement of policy.

The following activities have been designed to approximate situations that you may encounter in an immersion classroom. They may help you to reflect on what decisions you would make about the role of grammar instruction.

ACTIVITY 7 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of grammar instruction

1. Identify a grammar point that you may have to teach or review with your Grade 3 class. Examine the two approaches listed below and choose one that you would probably use in your class because it most closely approximates what you consider to be the most effective approach to teaching this grammar point.
 - a) Demonstrate to students the grammar point that you have selected by presenting students with model sentences that reflect the grammar point. Ask students to complete a series of sentences that will require applying this grammar point. Ask students to compare their sentences with those of a partner. As the partners are verifying their answers, they should note why they selected the answers noted on their papers.
 - b) During a social studies lesson, display a short paragraph on the overhead projector that reviews some aspect of life in modern day Ghana. Assuming that many examples of the grammar point that you wish to teach/review are evident in this paragraph ask students to help you identify these examples. Make a list of sentences in which the grammar point is present and guide students to arrive at some general rules for appropriate use of this grammar point.

Review the ideas presented in the paragraph and ask students to work in pairs and to write two summary statements of the ideas presented. Ask students to pay particular attention to the highlighted grammar point as they write their summaries. As a class, review several of the summary statements, drawing students' attention to both the summary and to the grammar point in the summary statements.

Can you think of another approach to teaching this grammar point?

ACTIVITY 7 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of grammar instruction

2. During a post-observation conference, your principal, who speaks the immersion language, asks you to describe your approach to teaching grammar to students. Using the example that you selected from the previous exercise, explain your approach and rationale to your principal. Discuss your approach with a colleague if possible.

3. During a parent-teacher conference, parents ask you to explain how their child will learn the grammar of the immersion language. These parents studied a language in high school through a grammar translation approach, but they did not enjoy learning a language taught this way. Explain to these parents how you are providing grammar instruction to their child. Compare your response with that of your colleagues, if possible.

ACTIVITY 8

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of error correction

The role of error correction is another question that you will face in your classroom on a daily basis. Error correction and its role in the process of second language acquisition is another area where there is disagreement among the experts. Some researchers believe that error correction is not necessary and that immersion students will learn the correct forms of the language through exposure to foreign language models. Other experts disagree. They feel that immersion students' language development reaches a plateau unless students' errors are corrected. Researchers of this opinion note that unless corrected, students' errors become "fossilized" and are very difficult to change later.

What's the best approach to dealing with errors made by students in the classroom? Do you correct them all? Do you focus your efforts on only a few errors? Do you correct errors as students are making them? Or do you emphasize correct usage later? Do you teach students correct language usage in isolation from other subjects? Or do you integrate teaching of correct language usage with the teaching of other subjects? While there are no research studies that provide definitive answers to these questions, some immersion program experiences indicate that certain approaches to error correction seem to produce better results than others.

ACTIVITY 8 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of error correction

In the video program, the following guidelines are suggested for deciding on how best to approach the question of error correction:

- o Does the error interfere with communication?
- o Is the error widespread among students?
- o Will error correction lead to instruction of a specific language structure? If so, is this structure easily generalized to other situations? (For example: in French, noun/adjective agreement in number and gender could be easily generalized. In contrast, emphasizing that "pants" is a singular noun, "un pantalon" has very limited possibility to be generalized.)
- o Is the language concept simple or complex? (An example of a simple language concept in French is that most adjectives are made feminine by adding "e" to the masculine form. In contrast, use of the correct verb tense in a sentence with an "if" clause is a much more complicated concept.)
- o Will it take students a great deal of time to learn the concept? (Consider the example cited in the preceding point. Compare the amount of time that it probably would take students to first grasp and then apply adjective agreement as opposed to understanding and use of the correct verb tense in a sentence with an "if" clause. Which concept would be more difficult for students to learn and to apply during a conversation or writing assignment in their foreign language?)

ACTIVITY 8 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of error correction

Once you've decided how you'll approach error correction in your immersion classroom, you'll want to think about a rationale to share with colleagues, administrators, and parents. You'll also want to be sure to remain current on the most recent research studies so that you may consider new information as soon as it is published.

Keeping these guidelines in mind, how would you approach error correction in the following situations?

1. At the beginning of the day, during roll call, a Grade 1 student tells you what she did last night, saying, "We go store. Mommy, sister and me go store. We have fun. We bought 2 shirt." Select from the three possibilities below how you would respond:
 - _____ A. "No, Ann, you should say, "We went to the store. My mommy, my sister and I went to the store. We had fun. We bought 2 shirts. (underlining indicates emphasis added.) You continue, "Class, let's repeat with Ann, 'We went to the store. (pause so class may repeat) My mommy, my sister and I went to the store. (pause) We had fun. (pause) We bought 2 shirts. (pause)"
 - _____ B. "No, Anne, you should say, 'We went to the store. My mommy, my sister and I went to the store. We had fun. W We bought 2 shirts. Would you please repeat it correctly, Anne?"
 - _____ C. "Oh, you went to the store with your mother and your sister? You had a good time? What colors were the two shirts you bought at the store?" (To help student get started, you provide the following verbal prompt.) "The shirts are..."
Anne: "The shirts are green, red."

If you selected "C" would you ever want to "correct" these errors? How would you do it?

ACTIVITY 8 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

The role of error correction

2. During a Grade 5 science lesson, a student offers the following description about changes that he observed when you mixed baking soda and vinegar together: "It explode out of cup. Not like bomb, but some little went out of cup." In light of the errors contained in this response, how would you respond to this student? It may be helpful for you to try to approximate the student's statement in your foreign language, hypothesizing what errors might be made. Then, of course, you could also formulate your response in your immersion language.

PART IV
SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
Age, Aptitude, Personality,
and Motivation
Program Summary

ACTIVITY 9

Student output - Second language acquisition

Age, aptitude, personality, and motivation

We've discussed a number of elements in the language acquisition process, over which you can exercise some degree of control in order to maximize opportunities for students to develop language proficiency. For example, you can control and adjust caregiver speech and context to meet students' needs.

There are four student characteristics over which you have little or no control. They are age, aptitude, personality, and motivation. And yet, there is no question that each plays a role in second language acquisition. Once again, there is some debate over exactly what role each of these student characteristics plays in second language acquisition. Let's examine some of the issues raised and what we know about each of these characteristics.

The question of at what age is the best to begin study of a foreign language is one that has been debated for many years. Research studies show that older learners probably learn a foreign language more quickly than younger learners (Krashen, Stephen D., Robin C. Scarcella and Michael H. Long, eds., Child-Adult Differences in Second Language Acquisition. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1982, page 161.) However, studies also show that in the long run, younger learners probably learn more foreign language. Additionally, younger learners' pronunciation is usually superior to that of older learners.

ACTIVITY 9 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Age, aptitude, personality, and motivation

Personality is another student characteristic that may affect students' foreign language learning. Observations tell us that extroverted students interact with classmates and teachers more often and more easily than introverted students. (Wong-Fillmore, L. "The Second Time Around: Cognitive and Social Structures in Second Language Acquisition." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1976). In other words, extroverted students may get more practice using the foreign language. Therefore chances are greater that extroverted students may tend to dominate pair and group work as well as classroom discussions. You'll want to keep this in mind as you structure group situations and seek out ways to encourage and provide equal opportunities for all students to participate in class discussions and activities.

Aptitude, defined by Webster as "a natural ability, a capacity for learning," (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary. Merriam-Webster Inc. Springfield, MA, 1985, page 98) may also play a role in second/foreign language learning. It is important to note however, that research studies show that almost all students can succeed in immersion classrooms (Cummins, Jim. Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 1984, pages 176-177). While some research on second language acquisition has found common characteristics shared by successful learners, no study has proven conclusively that these characteristics are critical to a student's success in a second/foreign language classroom.

ACTIVITY 9 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Age, aptitude, personality, and motivation

Motivation is an important factor as students of any age, aptitude, or personality learn a foreign language. Students in immersion classes have a dual motivation to learn the foreign language. First, even the youngest immersion students soon realize that their involvement in classroom activities is the key to their understanding and expressing themselves in the foreign language. And second, students strive to please their teacher. Teacher's positive reinforcement as students demonstrate understanding and begin to express themselves in the foreign language increases students' motivation.

To summarize, while you will not have direct control over the age, personality, aptitude, or motivation of your students, your awareness of the possible impact of each of these factors can help you make important classroom decisions that will enhance the classroom learning environment.

Now let's turn our attention to several exercises that focus on the role of age, personality, aptitude, and motivation of your students.

ACTIVITY 9 - continued

Student output - Second language acquisition

Age, aptitude, personality, and motivation

1. As you consider your class list to plan for grouping students heterogeneously to work together, note how you think each of these factors may influence your assignment of students to work together. Discuss your thoughts with a colleague.

Age

Aptitude

Personality

Motivation

2. A Grade 5 student is experiencing difficulties in class. In addition to not completing her work, she has begun misbehaving in class. A Grade 2 colleague has suggested that the two of you arrange a time during the school day when the Grade 5 student may come to the Grade 2 class to read to and with individual students or small groups of students. Considering age, aptitude, motivation and personality, make a list of possible positive and negative results. If possible, discuss your list with a colleague.

Positive results

Negative results

Age

Aptitude

Personality

Motivation

ACTIVITY 10

Second Language Acquisition

Summary

Listed below are terms that were used either in the video program or the Teacher's Activity Manual. First, try to define each one in your own words without going back to the video or the manual. Once you've defined them, compare your definition with those presented in the program or the manual.

Caregiver speech

Contextualized language

Comprehensible input

Output

Hypothesis testing/Negotiation of meaning

Prefabricated language

Activity 10 - continued

Second Language Acquisition

Summary

Discuss your views of the role of each of the following in second language acquisition:

Input

Output

Grammar instruction

Error correction

Age

Aptitude

Personality

Motivation

BIBLIOGRAPHY